

## REVIEWS

*STATE MAKING IN ASIA*. Edited by Richard Boyd and Tak-Wing Ngo. New York: Routledge, 2006, 203 pp., ISBN 0415346118, \$150.00 (hardcover).

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Recent scholarship on the development of the state in Asia has gone beyond conventional state theory in the West to investigate the diverse patterns of historical change in various Asian countries, indigenous traditions of order and governance, and the cultural, social and economic institutions that have shaped the state making process. Richard Boyd and Tak-Wing Ngo have been at the forefront of this type of interdisciplinary research on Asian states for many years and their edited work *State Making in Asia* is a stellar example of the latest scholarship in this field.

The eight essays in this work address the following questions: How do we conceptualize state making projects from a uniquely Asian perspective? How does the state making process become integrated into the local traditions of governance and the existing political, social, economic and cultural institutions in Asia? In what ways do state making patterns in Asia differ from those in the West? The editors and contributors answer these questions by referring to a variety of case studies ranging from Japan, China and Taiwan to the Tibetan Diaspora and Malaysia. They offer important thematic and methodological insights as they investigate the impact of indigenous traditions of governance on state making and analyze the institutional mechanisms that have enabled these traditions to shape the creation of nation-states in modern Asia.

In their introductory essay, Boyd and Ngo argue that unique features of modern European states such as territoriality, secularism, sovereignty and nationality cannot be used as absolute criteria to examine the complexity of state making in Asia. Given the geographical, historical and cultural diversity of Asia, it is important to look at how political elites across Asia combined Western state institutions with local practices of governance to empower themselves, how they re-interpreted the concepts of territorial sovereignty, nationality and citizenship according to their unique history and concerns, and how they developed institutional mechanisms to impose a new sense of nationhood upon existing ethnic, religious and cultural identities. Therefore, the transmission of Western nationalism and the appropriation of European state institutions are the focus of discussion. The following essays examine the symbiosis between state and indigenous contexts in all temporal and spatial settings.

Mark Ravina and Richard Boyd focus on modern Japan as they describe the Japanese state making a deliberate attempt to conform to the Western-dominated system of nation-states in global politics. Ravina examines the origins of the state making process in Meiji Japan. Internally, the Meiji government introduced new rituals and customs to convey a new concept of citizenship to its subjects; externally, it strengthened Japan's military and diplomatic status by following a Western path of modernization. Paradoxically, the Meiji state reinvented itself in the light of the Western imperialist powers which it sought to defend itself against. Boyd explores the tension between bureaucratic sectionalism and administrative transcendence in Japan after the end of the Second World War. The Japanese state witnessed a phenomenon of bureaucratic sectionalism in which the government bureaucracy paralleled the ruling political party, and the different organs of the government and the ruling party constantly competed for power. This development led to the intensification of intra-government rivalries and chaos in postwar Japanese politics. There was a code of administrative transcendence that depicted the bureaucrats as guardians of the state. As elite officials, they occupied an autonomous space above the politicians and the public. This portrayal of the bureaucrats reflected the strong influence of Confucianism in Japanese statecraft. This ongoing tension still characterizes state-bureaucracy relations in Japan today.

As complex as the Japanese case is, the Greater China region witnessed three different patterns of state making in modern times. According to R. Bin Wong, the concepts of citizenship, nation and state have evolved in modern China based on existing ideas and practices of statecraft and the appropriation of state institutions from the West. Wong discusses this multidimen-

sional process of state making from the Qing Dynasty to the present. The Qing ruling class tried to introduce top-down programs of modernization and constitutional reforms in order to create a set of Confucian cultural practices that transcended existing regional, ethnic and linguistic boundaries. With the collapse of the imperial dynasty in 1911, Confucianism was rejected and a new Chinese national identity was defined as fighting against foreign aggression and safeguarding the motherland. This notion of national identity remained intact even after the Communist takeover in 1949. The problem with this top-down approach of state building is that Chinese authorities failed to engage subjects as citizens with constitutional rights and responsibilities clearly defined by their relationship to the state. To China's ruling elite, concern with the state's unity always took precedence over citizens' rights.

Jenn-Hwan Wang draws attention to the Taiwanese case. After retreating to Taiwan, the Nationalists insisted on sovereignty over the mainland and organized the government structure modeled on all regions of China as if they could have governed the whole country from the island. Even though the regime had only political control of Taiwan and its adjacent islands, its claimed sovereignty and legitimacy over China were purely based on their international recognition during the Cold War. But when President Richard Nixon decided to improve relations with Beijing in 1971, the US government no longer recognized the Nationalist regime as the legitimate government of China. This change of international climate created a legitimacy crisis for the Nationalist regime. Faced with the rise of domestic opposition and growing demands for democratization, there was a strong tendency for politicians, intellectuals and grassroots activists to transform a Chinese Nationalist state into a Taiwanese state that corresponded more closely to its territorial realities in the 1980s and 1990s.

Unlike Japan, China and Taiwan, Tibet is not an independent political entity. Although the Tibetan exiles in Nepal and India cannot lay an exclusive claim to any territory, they have been capable of creating the basic institutions of modern statehood. Ann Frechette characterizes the Tibetan refugee camp as a latent government that is fully equipped with democratic institutions and lays claim to sovereign authority over Tibet. In a fashion similar to the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza strip today, the ability to create a sense of nationhood in exile suggests that Tibetans successfully appropriated the conventional idea of territorial sovereignty to create an imaginary space for political participation and empowerment.

Unlike Japan and China, Malaysia is the result of British colonialism. Even though the Malaysian state assumed the appearance of a modern multi-ethnic state based on the Western model, there are still unresolved tensions and conflicts between the ruling elites, the different ethnic and religious communities, and the various local states. A. B. Shamsul and Sity Daud analyze the new political project aimed at creating a united Malaysian nation-state, a *Bangsa Malaysia*, by 2020. This project of cultivating a homogeneous Malaysian national identity has been strongly contested by non-Muslims, especially Chinese and Tamil groups, who advocate a more pluralistic nationhood and multiethnic state with equal status for all ethnic groups. In the meantime, the radical Muslim party has been campaigning for the creation of an Islamic state. It is clear that ethnicity, religion and equal citizen rights in Malaysia are intertwined in the competing claims about nationalism aimed at advancing the agendas of particular interest groups.

In the concluding essay, Laurence Whitehead pulls all the themes together and draws attention to the diverse patterns of state making across Asia. What these Asian states have in common is their capacity to achieve effective control over vast territories and diverse subjects. The Asian states analyzed in this volume effectively have combined traditional cultural resources with European state institutions to develop new national identities and govern their subjects. This development adds an inter-Asian dimension to ongoing discussions on state making.

In sum, the major strength of this work lies in its clear and sophisticated framework to bring history and culture to bear on the study of state making in modern Asia. This work is full of insights and should help us gain a better understanding of politics in Asia.

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